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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: PM KHIN NYUNT'S SPEECH: THE BURMESE ROAD TO
"DISCIPLINED DEMOCRACY"

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

1. (C) Summary: On August 30 General Khin Nyunt delivered his first speech as Prime Minister (and perhaps the first such policy address from Burma's military regime in over ten years), promising a seven-step transition to a "disciplined democracy." However, his "Road Map of Myanmar" offers nothing that hasn't been promised before during the military regime's 15-year rule. Absent any details--or even a basic timeline--the speech did nothing to convince observers in Burma that the SPDC has any intention of giving up power. Khin Nyunt's specific criticism of ASSK and the NLD gives us further evidence that the SPDC is determined to dismantle the pro-democracy movement. End summary.

2. (C) On Saturday August 30, SPDC General Khin Nyunt delivered a policy speech "clarifying the future policies and programs of the State" to a large cast of military and government officials, including members of the junta's governing council, cabinet ministers, regional military commanders, and representatives of state-sponsored organizations. The 80 minute address, delivered Saturday morning at Rangoon's refurbished Parliament building, was his first policy pronouncement as Burma's new Prime Minister and was broadcast later in the day on official television. The GOB did not invite the diplomatic corps, ethnic groups, or international NGOs to the speech.

The SPDC Saviors

3. (C) In his policy speech, a rarity for leaders of the Burmese regime, General Khin Nyunt extolled the virtues of the armed forces ("Tatmadaw") and delivered a stale defense of the 1988 military coup which brought the current regime to power. Citing dubious economic data, and incongruous statistics such as "128 PhD students produced in the last three years" and "1,012 miles of new railroads since 1989," Khin Nyunt devoted the first half of his speech to the SPDC's standard argument that the military alone is capable of leading Burma's diverse population and saving the country from falling into chaos.

4. (C) Khin Nyunt used his address to direct pointed criticism at the National League for Democracy (NLD) and Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK). Alleging that the NLD had "placed the attitude and wishes of an individual (ASSK) and the interests of its own party above the national cause," Khin Nyunt blamed the NLD for the collapse of the National Convention in 1996--and, by inference, blocking a transition to democracy--and for convincing "some big countries" to unjustly pressure the SPDC. He also accused the NLD of "continuous political manipulations to bring down the present government," a thinly veiled accusation that ASSK had provoked the May 30 violent attack against her and her convoy of party members and supporters. These negative references were the only specific mention in the speech of the democratic opposition.

Road Map to a "Disciplined Democratic System"

5. (C) In his speech, Khin Nyunt unveiled what he called a seven step "Road Map of Myanmar." Without offering details or specifying a timeline, the PM said the government would, step-by-step, reconvene the National Convention; implement a "genuine and disciplined democratic system;" draft a new constitution; adopt the constitution through a national referendum; hold parliamentary elections; convene a new Parliament; and form a new Parliamentary-based government. The reference to a "disciplined democracy," and repeated references to the need for a home-grown democratic system, suggested that the SPDC anticipates the military will maintain supreme authority over any future government.

Comment: Hopes Dashed

6. (C) Despite widespread mistrust of the military regime, many Burmese had some expectations that Khin Nyunt's speech, given his recent appointment as Prime Minister and the rarity of direct policy communications from the regime, might actually deliver some new, if not good, news. On both

accounts, the Burmese people were sorely disappointed. Khin Nyunt's "Road Map of Myanmar," while neatly packaged, is nothing more than a collection of empty promises proffered by the SLORC and SPDC at different junctures over the past fifteen years. "We've heard all of this before" has been a common refrain on the streets of Rangoon over the past two days.

17. (C) General Khin Nyunt's speech also underscored the SPDC's apparent resolve to exclude ASSK and the NLD from the political process in Burma. He specifically noted that the government would reconvene the National Convention "that has been adjourned since 1996," which by definition describes the Convention after the NLD withdrew in protest. Many observers here had also hoped that Khin Nyunt would announce a release of political prisoners, a Burmese tradition in speeches "from the throne," and give some indication as to when the SPDC would free ASSK and her colleagues from "protective custody."

Not only did the PM fail to deliver on these expectations, his personal criticism of ASSK and the NLD leads many to believe that the regime has every intention of completing the total dismantling of the NLD, a process that began with the May 30 attack and was followed by the shuttering of all NLD offices and a mass roundup of NLD leaders and members. End comment.

Martinez